



# Careers 2020

Options for future careers work  
in English schools

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The Pearson Think Tank with the International Centre for Guidance Studies

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# I

# Executive summary

## Introduction

Careers work in English schools has endured much turbulence recently. The government has now established a statutory duty on schools to secure provision, placing commissioning of careers advice and guidance in the hands of schools rather than local authorities or central government. But the duty is framed very loosely, comes with no funding and offers no clear model of provision. The previous funding for face-to-face guidance from qualified careers advisers has been removed, as has the duty for schools to provide careers education. So what should schools' careers offers look like in future? How can schools ensure the quality of the career development support that is so vital for young people, and particularly so for those who cannot rely on their existing networks for advice and opportunities?

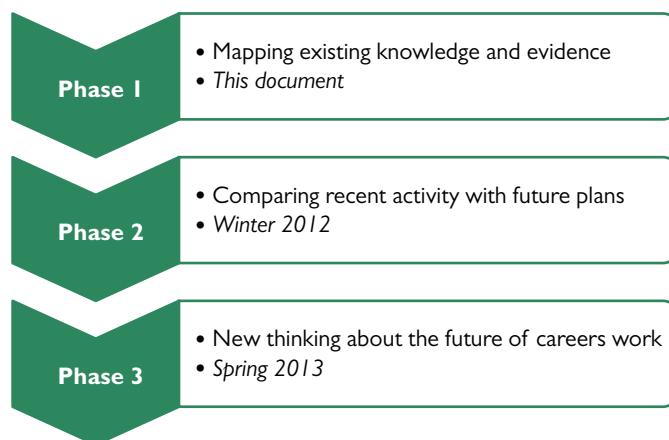
### Key recommendations

Careers is a vital policy area which needs ongoing attention and investment. The current context of high unemployment, austerity and recession is a perfect storm for young people – and one which a decline in careers work in schools threatens to exacerbate. We have four key recommendations:

- 1. Government should be carefully monitoring changing practices and ensuring that schools are providing appropriate career support for young people** – international evidence suggests that current policies are likely to lead to a decline in provision, so it is important that the situation is monitored to evaluate the current policies and support future policy-making.
- 2. Government should also carefully monitor the impact of any decline in school-based careers work on social mobility and social inclusion** – there are concerns that the changes will have a disproportionate impact on more vulnerable and less advantaged learners.
- 3. Schools should be encouraged to conceive careers as a key component of their mission and to actively link this to the curriculum** – evidence shows that careers work is most effective when it is well supported by school leadership and delivered in a way that is strongly connected to the curriculum.
- 4. Attention should be given to how schools are supported to deliver effective and high-quality careers work in the new policy context** – the loss of the middle tier between schools and government (notably local authorities and Connexions) risks leaving some schools isolated, with potentially weak infrastructures for professional development and practice improvement.

This summary sets out the key findings from an evidence-based review of careers work in English schools. The review charts the history of careers work in England, and is accompanied by a summary version that school decision-makers may draw on to inform their choices about careers provision. The review draws together the research evidence on the constituents of high-quality careers provision, and distils these findings to make recommendations for best practice. A key finding is that curriculum-led approaches, in which careers

activities are linked to the curriculum, are the most effective. Such practices will be imperative if standards of careers work are to be maintained or improved, given the less directive approach to provision, and if a potentially detrimental impact on social mobility is to be avoided. This review is the result of a partnership between the Pearson Think Tank ([thepearsonthinktank.com](http://thepearsonthinktank.com)) and the International Centre for Guidance Studies at the University of Derby ([www.derby.ac.uk/icegs](http://www.derby.ac.uk/icegs)) as part of the Careers 2020 project, which seeks to scope how young people can best be supported to plan for, and progress into, their futures.



The Careers 2020 Project

## The rationale for careers work in schools

If careers work is to command public resources and a place within the school timetable, it is important to set out a clear rationale for the activity. We identify three main policy goals that are served by careers work in schools:

- learning goals related to improving the efficiency of the education and training system and managing its interface with the labour market, including supporting student motivation and attainment and reducing drop-out;
- labour-market goals related to improving the match between supply and demand and managing adjustments to change;
- social-equity goals related to supporting social mobility and promoting social inclusion.

In order to be successful, young people need both skills and knowledge, but they also need to be able to make effective learning choices, to find and keep work, and to play an effective role in the economic and civic life of the nation. The context of rapid global and technological change, coupled with the recent economic downturn, makes these issues even more crucial.

Career learning is a key means through which schools have supported young people to think about how their learning fits with their life beyond school. Career learning is not just a process of matching young people to the labour market, but rather a broad curriculum area (which is related to, but distinct from, other elements of personal, social, health and economic [PSHE] education and other subjects) that equips learners to manage their life and learning. It also complements career guidance, which is generally provided on an individual basis to support individual decision-making.

In the past, schools could rely on a range of partnership agencies to support the delivery of careers work. The Careers Service, and then Connexions, provided professional career guidance and also supported career learning, as did Aimhigher, education business partnerships and other local and national

organisations. For the most part, these supporting organisations have now either closed down or had their services considerably reduced. Following the Education Act 2011, schools have the responsibility to drive their own practice in this area. In a context of reduced support from external partners and no transfer of funding, there is an urgent need to develop new high-quality models of delivery in schools.

## Review findings

### Implications for schools: opportunities and risks

The Education Act 2011 includes a new duty for schools to ‘secure access to independent and impartial careers guidance for their pupils from September 2012’. The statutory guidance issued to clarify this duty defines ‘independent’ as ‘external to the school’. However, it also indicates that such access should be provided ‘where it is the most suitable support for young people to make successful transitions’. Implicitly, it is left for schools to determine this, on whatever criteria they choose.

Schools are already taking a range of different approaches in order to meet their new responsibilities. Some are continuing to use external careers providers, contracting them in to deliver agreed services. Others are providing career learning and/or career guidance through internal resources, either by employing a professional qualified careers adviser or by using teaching staff (or other non-teaching staff) with varying degrees of qualification (or none) to deliver provision.

International evidence suggests that the transfer of responsibility for career guidance to schools carries a strong risk of a decline in the extent and quality of careers work. The research suggests this might have been the case, even if Connexions’ funding had been transferred to schools. However, that funding was not transferred, so an even greater decline seems likely to follow in England.

## Approaches to delivery

This paper outlines the various components of careers work that schools use to encourage career learning and support career decisions, all of which can be important. However, it is perhaps of even more value to examine why schools take the overall approach to delivery that they do. Three types of approach that may underpin schools’ activities in this area can be distinguished:

- activity-based approaches;
- service-based approaches;
- curriculum-led approaches.

In **activity-based approaches**, schools provide a series of activities which are disconnected from each other and, crucially, from the school’s curriculum. These typically include employer talks, visits to learning providers and careers fairs, and are often pragmatically organised to fit into gaps in the existing curriculum, e.g. after assessment periods in the summer term. The activities themselves may or may not be well run, engaging and effective within their own terms, but if their integration into the school curriculum is absent, their long-term impact is likely to be limited.

In **service-based approaches**, young people are guaranteed access to a service that can inform and support their individual career decisions. Service-based approaches may be conceived on a one-off basis or they may be coherent, progressive and developmental. They are typically focused on work with individuals, and include the provision of information, support with decision-making and support for transitions (e.g. filling in Universities and Colleges Admissions Service [UCAS] forms).

Finally, schools may adopt a **curriculum-led approach**, in which career is seen as an important focal point for learning, with a body of knowledge, skills and pedagogic approaches connected with it. In a learning approach, the various careers work components are integrated into the mainstream curriculum to provide a coherent, meaningful and developmental education. There is evidence both from the UK and internationally demonstrating that this approach is the most effective mode of delivery for careers work in schools. However, given the centrality of the curriculum, these approaches require substantial buy-in from school leaders, with support from partners and in-school champions.

## Conclusions and key questions for the future

Schools have a moral responsibility to ensure that young people leave school with the skills, knowledge, attitudes and attributes to manage their life, learning and work. Young people's understanding of career and progression routes, as well as their level of preparation for the workplace, supports their ability to progress effectively within learning and the labour market, and consequently underpins social mobility and economic efficiency. In this, as in many other respects, schools now have greater autonomy than ever before. This paper presents a framework within which schools can consider their approaches to careers work. It argues that there are considerable advantages in considering how the concept of 'career' can become integral to the mission of the school, and suggests that approaches that integrate a varied menu of career learning activities into the mainstream curriculum (e.g. the curriculum-led approach described above) are more effective than 'bolt-on' approaches to careers education.

The paper also sets out a series of questions for different constituencies:

## Key questions for policy-makers

- How far do the goals of careers work, described here as learning goals, labour-market goals and social-equity goals, connect with current policy concerns, including wider policy aims for education and youth policy?
- How can accountability frameworks be used to inform schools' successful participation in the new market for careers work?
- What resources can be provided centrally, via local authorities, academy chains or other 'middle-tier' structures, via relevant professional bodies or directly to schools, to encourage and support the adoption of the curriculum-led model?

## Key questions for schools

- How far does existing careers work connect to the mission, ethos and curriculum of the whole school, and how can these be made to align more effectively?
- What level of expertise exists within the school to support the delivery of careers work, and how might this expertise be developed and supplemented?
- How can internal resources and external partners be most effectively utilised to support the career learning of young people?

## Key questions for researchers

- What are the attitudes and levels of understanding of school leaders and general teaching staff in relation to careers work? How are these attitudes likely to impact on resource allocation to careers work in schools?
- As the school-based careers-work market unfolds in 2012–13, what is the nature of the market (number and types of players, overall value and dynamism) and the consequent nature of practice in schools? What impacts (positive or negative) will these have on the career management skills of young people?
- What approaches can be suggested for schools through examination of both international evidence and innovative practices in related fields?

This paper aims to open up a discussion on careers work in schools that supports reflective, constructive and evidence-based approaches to the changing terrain. At the heart of this discussion, it is important to reassert the importance of ensuring that young people have access to the high-quality career support they need in order to realise their potential and contribute to society. The next phase of Careers 2020 will establish how schools are already responding and how they plan to respond in the future.

# 2

# Introduction

What kind of preparation does the English school system provide for life and work? Under the coalition government, the administration of schooling is being substantially changed, in the pursuit of higher academic standards. However, an important question that needs to be posed is whether the current changes to the school system are likely to result in young people being more or less able to make effective choices and transitions to further learning and work, to lead fulfilling lives, and to go on to play effective roles in the economic and civic life of the nation.

A bedrock of social and economic participation is the possession of the necessary core skills. Without literacy, numeracy and digital literacy, young people will not have the tools to fully engage with society and to secure and keep work. However, on their own, such skills and associated knowledge are not sufficient. Young people also need to be able to manage the application of such skills and knowledge as they progress in learning and work – in other words, in their career. Career learning addresses this need for young people to be equipped to undertake this process of connecting their own interests and abilities, and what they have learned in the school system, to the world beyond school.

Career learning is not just about the process of choosing and transitioning into a job. Rather, it is about thinking through the range of roles that individuals might play over the course of their lives. A career is pursued at work, but also through learning, through hobbies and interests, at home, and through relationships with family, friends and colleagues. How schools tackle this complex web of issues is clearly not straightforward; furthermore, the approaches that have been used in the past will need to be modified and developed in response to trends in policy, technology and the economy. This paper is concerned with exploring how schools might best undertake this role in the future.

The paper is based on a literature review of research and thinking on school-based careers work. The review has been largely confined to the examination of careers work in secondary schools, as this is where the current English policy debate is centred. This should not be interpreted to mean that the authors believe that there is not also a crucial role, and history of practice, research and theory, in relation to careers work within primary education (see, most recently, Wade *et al.*, 2010), as well as within further education, higher education and adult learning. The review has included evidence from England, the UK and overseas, although international evidence is drawn on only where it is relevant to current English policy debates. This is not to suggest that there are not further lessons to be learned from the wider international experience, but rather to ensure that the focus remains on the issues of current concern in England.

The review is particularly focused on the interface between policy and practice and with the identification of relevant models and approaches. A previous literature review by some of the authors examined the role of school-based careers work and explored the existing evidence for its impact on positive outcomes for school pupils (Hooley *et al.*, 2011). It found that careers work in schools could have positive outcomes on retention of students in the school system, academic achievement, transitions to learning and work, and career and life success (see also other literature reviews on this topic: Bowes *et al.*, 2005; Hughes & Gration, 2009; Whiston *et al.*, 2011). The present examination builds on these studies by addressing the question: ‘How can these positive outcomes be most effectively delivered within schools?’

As will be discussed, current policy changes mean that responsibility for career learning in England has largely moved to schools, within a relatively loose framework set by the government. Whereas in the past, the government has sought to set more detailed policy frameworks and to support schools through the provision of a partnership agency (previously the Careers Service and, more recently, Connexions), following the Education Act 2011, schools will drive their own policies in this area. Consequently, this paper is addressed to those who are able to make a difference in this respect, namely:

- the policy-makers who set the context within which schools operate;
- the school leaders who make the policies within schools and drive practice;
- the teachers and careers professionals who implement the policies and can innovate within the frameworks they are offered.

# 3

# The rationale for careers work in schools

It is useful to begin with a consideration of the rationale for careers work in schools. In a crowded timetable, career learning is likely to have to fight for space with a range of other important academic and vocational subjects; career guidance, too, competes with other demands on resources. So what is it that makes careers work particularly important? It has already been stated that it can have an impact on the retention, attainment, transition and life success of school pupils (Hooley et al., 2011). However, it may be possible to achieve some or all of these outcomes in other ways. Accordingly, it is important to review the conceptual rationale for career learning in broader terms.

Careers work in schools describes a set of interventions that schools can use to encourage young people to think about, prepare for and develop the skills required to move into their future. Careers work supports wise decision-making in relation to course choices within the school, but it also supports young people in developing the career management skills that will enable them to engage positively with learning and labour markets throughout their lives.

In *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2004) set out three main public-policy rationales for the delivery of this kind of activity: first, that it supports engagement with learning and improves the functioning of the education and training system; secondly, that it contributes to the effective operation of the labour market; and thirdly, that it supports social equity and facilitates both social inclusion and social mobility.

Careers work in schools contributes to **learning goals**, including improving the efficiency of the education and training system and managing its interface with the labour market. If individuals make decisions about what they are to learn in a well informed and well-thought-through way, linked to their interests, their capacities and their aspirations, investments in education and training systems are likely to yield higher returns.

In particular, careers work can support learning goals by enhancing student motivation, attainment and progression. It has been found to increase students' aspirations for post-secondary education, their levels of planning and readiness to transition, and their levels of successful completion (Metis Associates, 1999; Smith et al., 2005; Wimberly & Noeth, 2005; Nicoletti & Berthoud, 2010). In addition, it has also been found to increase school engagement and educational attainment (Kenny et al., 2006; Gratama, 2007; Carey & Harrington, 2010). Careers work therefore provides an important mechanism for linking individuals' aspirations and motivations to their engagement in the education and training system.

Careers work also serves **labour-market goals**, including improving the match between supply and demand and managing adjustments to change. If people find jobs that utilise their potential and meet their own goals, they are likely to be more motivated and therefore more productive.

In particular, careers work provides a mechanism for young people preparing for their entry to the labour market to gain access to information and support that can guide their participation in that market. From an economic perspective, the aim is to ensure that actors within the labour market have access

to information that can enable informed decision-making within that market and so enhance its effective operation. This includes enhancing awareness about qualification levels, skills needs and occupational opportunities, as well as facilitating labour mobility and flexibility.

Reconciling labour supply and demand is particularly important in areas where there are skills shortages and under-supply of labour. If young people are not choosing to move into areas of the labour market where there are both personal opportunities and skills needs, there is clearly a public-policy interest in addressing this issue. This has been notably the case in relation to the policy agenda on skills supply in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), where research has focused on the way in which socio-economic background (Gorard & See, 2008) and gender (Ceci *et al.*, 2009; Smith, 2010; Diekman *et al.*, 2010) have shaped engagement with such subjects. In the UK, there has been an ongoing policy response (Roberts, 2002; Livingstone & Hope, 2011; House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2011), backed by a raft of initiatives seeking to promote STEM careers among young people (e.g. Hutchinson *et al.*, 2009).

Finally, careers work also supports a range of **social-equity goals**, including supporting social mobility and promoting social inclusion. Career guidance services can enhance the aspirations of disadvantaged groups and support them in gaining access to opportunities that might otherwise have been denied to them.

Careers work facilitates social mobility by encouraging young people to challenge their assumptions and think beyond their immediate environment. Young people's aspirations and subsequent careers are strongly shaped by a range of contextual factors (Anderson & Cavallaro, 2002; Schoon & Parsons, 2002). Research highlights the roles that are played by parents (Li *et al.*, 2007), the media (Van den Bulck & Beullens, 2007), ethnicity (Shah *et al.*, 2010), gender (Ofsted, 2011) and geography (Kintrea *et al.*, 2011), as well as a range of other social and contextual factors. In summary, it is possible to say that who you are and where you come from have a big impact both on what you want to do and on where you ultimately end up.

Concern about social mobility has been highlighted as a policy concern under both the current and previous governments (Milburn, 2009; Hughes, 2011). Given these concerns about the way in which contextual factors shape young people's aspirations and career journeys, there is clearly a role for the education system in addressing these issues overtly. Encouraging young people to think critically about their own ideas and aspirations, to identify the personal basis for these ideas and to consider alternatives to them are all key activities for careers work. Careers work seeks to problematise received wisdom and stereotypical thinking and to create a space within which a range of personal alternatives can be considered. Watts (1996) described this approach as a 'progressive' approach to career guidance, where careers workers see their role as one of actively influencing young people to fulfil their potential and consequently to influence the way in which opportunity is distributed across society.

In addition, careers work supports social inclusion by directly addressing the processes through which young people become socially excluded. Webster *et al.* (2004) described young people's journeys to social exclusion as a series of interlinked careers: school-to-work career; family career; housing career; leisure career; drug-using career; and criminal career. In other words, as young people move through and beyond school, they make a variety of decisions that shape their lives in ways which either take them towards social inclusion or potentially away from it through experiences such as truancy, unplanned pregnancy, drug use and criminality. This broader conceptualisation of career as being about a wide raft of life, learning and work decisions aligns closely to the way in which careers professionals tend to conceptualise their work.

Careers work encourages young people to develop a positive future orientation and to look beyond the immediate present. The inability to delay gratification is often associated with those who end up socially excluded (Twenge et al., 2003; Baumeister et al., 2005), but thinking about career increases future orientation and understanding of why it is sometimes necessary to delay gratification (Marko & Savickas, 1998). The recent *Pathways to Prosperity* report in the USA argues that a major reason why students drop out of high school is that they cannot see a ‘clear, transparent connection between their program of study and tangible opportunities in the labor market’ (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2011, pp. 10–11). Careers work provides a way in which young people can be encouraged to extend their future orientation and to make the connection between school and their future selves. It also creates a mechanism through which alternative education and work pathways can be explored for those for whom the academic route is not working. Understanding the range of education and employment options is central to careers workers’ professionalism, enabling them to provide young people with a greater range of suitable options for them to remain within the worlds of learning and work.

# 4

# The evolution of provision in England

Careers work in schools has a long history in England. Peck (2004) described how, from 1948, Youth Employment Officers were involved in liaising with schools and supporting the transitions of young people to the labour market. From the early 1970s, educators began to recognise the limitations of a reactive approach which only engaged learners immediately prior to the point of transition. This was linked to important changes in the ways in which career development was conceived. In particular, the idea that individuals could be simply matched with labour market opportunities on the basis of their skills and interests was increasingly questioned. A succession of theorists proposed models that drew on ideas about psychological development (Super, 1957), sociological explanations of individual labour market behaviour (Roberts, 1977), the role of communities (Law, 1981) and ultimately on post-modern and post-structuralist conceptions of career and career development (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Mitchell et al., 1999; Pryor & Bright, 2003).

In response to some of these changes, the 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence and growth of the role of careers education within the curriculum (Watts, 1973, 2001a; Ward, 1983; Law, 1996a; Andrews, 2011). Perhaps the most notable development in this respect was the creation of the 'DOTS framework' (Law & Watts, 1977), an approach to career learning that focuses on activities related to decision learning (D), opportunity awareness (O), transition learning (T) and self-awareness (S). Law & Watts (1977) also described four staged components, which were likely to comprise additive evolutionary stages in the development of a careers education and guidance programme:

1. information, e.g. a box of materials in a careers resource centre
2. interview, e.g. advice and/or counselling
3. curricular
4. integrated (including extra-curricular and community engagement).

The DOTS model has continued to be developed both by the original authors (e.g. Law, 1999) and by others. It has been noted by some commentators (Meijers & Piggott, 1995; Gysbers, 2008; Andrews, 2011) that it has dominated careers education in the UK, with some feeling that this has been to the detriment of innovation (McCash, 2006).

The creation of the National Curriculum led careers education to be identified as one of five cross-curricular themes (alongside health education, economic and industrial understanding, environmental education, and citizenship). Law (1996a) argued that the identification of these themes was largely driven by lobbying groups and that insufficient consideration was given to how this cross-curricular activity might actually work in practice. Despite these concerns, Cleaton (1993) concluded that the position of careers work was strengthening during this period. The guidance issued on this particular cross-curricular theme offered five models of careers education within the curriculum (NCC, 1990). Andrews (2011, p. 34) noted that this effectively created six approaches to curriculum organisation:

- separately timetabled career lessons;
- careers education as a module within a modular personal-social education (PSE) programme;
- careers education as an integrated part of a PSE course;
- careers education as part of a tutorial programme;
- long-block timetabling;
- careers education as a cross-curricular theme.

Andrews' typology of careers education echoed Watts' (2001a) earlier model which, drawing upon wider international evidence, organised the different approaches through four models of careers education based around their relationship with the wider curriculum. Watts described the four models as follows:

- a specific enclosed model, in which careers education is provided as a separate subject or module within the curriculum;
- an extended enclosed model, in which it is provided as part of a more broadly based subject or module – e.g. in the contemporary UK context, PSHE;
- an integrated model, in which it is integrated across the curriculum as a whole;
- an extracurricular model, in which it is provided as an additional element outside the boundaries of the formal curriculum.

Similar typologies have been identified in other work in England (Donoghue, 2008) and internationally (e.g. OECD, 2004; Sultana, 2004).

More broadly, Andrews (2000) identified the components that comprised successful models of careers education and guidance programmes in schools. He saw these as being:

- a planned programme of careers education in the curriculum;
- a full range of accurate and up-to-date careers information;
- access to advice and guidance, linked to support for recording and reviewing achievement, setting targets and action planning;
- experience of work.

A similar set of components, without the individual advice and guidance element, was advanced by the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) (ASCL et al., 2011).

All of these frameworks for careers work in schools see the curriculum as a legitimate and even essential location for careers education. However, the place of careers education within the curriculum as a stand-alone subject, as part of PSHE or as a cross-curricular theme, has been highly variable and dependent on policy shifts (Ward, 1983; Law, 1996a) and individual schools' capacity to understand and deliver careers work in a curricular form (Bowes et al., 2005; McCrone et al., 2009). The Education Act (1997, section 43) established a statutory duty for schools to provide a careers education programme for pupils in years 9–11. But, as Andrews (2011) pointed out, this only created a duty for schools to provide something that most were already doing, and did not specify either what they should do or how they should do it. Despite some conceptual alignment (see Law, 1996a), the inter-relationship between careers education and PSHE has not always been unproblematic, and there has been a tendency for careers education to be subsumed and marginalised within the broader subject (Bassot & Chant, 2010). Recently, Formby et al. (2011) found that careers education was most likely to be covered as part of discrete PSHE education lessons at key stages 3 (68%) and 4 (62%), or as part of themed day(s) at key stages 3 (23%) and 4 (27%).

Some of these challenges within the curriculum were exacerbated by the gradual redirection of Connexions' resources away from a universal service towards a targeted approach that was addressed especially to young people at risk. However, as McGowan *et al.* (2008) noted, the decline in support for universal services was neither uniform across the country nor uncontested. McCrone & Filmer-Sankey (2012) recently produced a literature review of school careers work with a particular emphasis on services which are targeted at the 'at risk' groups. They conclude that although much recent careers work has been targeted in this way, there is little research evidence on the impact of specific approaches for different types of young people.

The subsequent sections of this paper will explore the nature of careers work in schools by identifying its components in more detail and then examining how they are combined into a variety of overall approaches. Before addressing this, however, it is important to briefly discuss the partnership model, as this has been a feature of careers work that has distinguished it from most other educational interventions in schools.

## The role of the partnership model

Schools have the potential to operate as educational microclimates within which school leaders, teachers and (to varying extents) students are able to define the school's culture. The fact that schools are able to continue their daily business with relatively few outside influences has posed a problem for the government and has led to the use of a number of blunt policy instruments that aim to secure standards and improvement (GCSEs, National Curriculum, SATs, Ofsted, etc.). Achieving nationwide change has often meant introducing major innovations, which shift the fundamental drivers within the school.

Careers work has been handled in a different way by the government, in particular through the establishment and maintenance of a partnership organisation with responsibility to work with the school both to deliver services and to drive practice within the school. The existence of a partnership body provided the government with a lever through which it was possible to influence the behaviour of schools and, in particular, to provide a bridge between schools and the wider labour and learning markets. Furthermore, the partnership approach was based on a recognition that schools with sixth forms have their own institutional interests, which can be in tension with the career and progression choices of students (Foskett *et al.*, 2008).

Accordingly, the partnership model has hitherto been the dominant model for career guidance in schools, both in England and in the rest of the UK (Watts, 2008). For some time, the main roles for the external partners were to provide guidance interviews and to support work experience. In the 1980s, the model began to take more diverse forms, involving three levels of collaboration: parallel provision; pyramidal provision; and the guidance community/partnership model (Morris *et al.*, 1999a). As these partnerships developed, guidance professionals and partnership organisations became increasingly involved in the curriculum and in broader conceptions of the nature of careers work. The partnership approach was further strengthened by the 1997 Education Act, which mandated schools to co-operate with careers advisers, particularly in relation to interviewing pupils.

However, with the creation of Connexions, the weakening of the careers element of the service and the increasing focus on at-risk young people, the partnership model began to decline (Watts, 2008). The policy approach manifested through Connexions was widely criticised (e.g. Watts, 2001b; Milburn, 2009) and by the end of the noughties the idea of re-establishing a more focused careers service returned to the political agenda, now on an all-age basis.

But the approach that was pursued once the coalition government came to power was not merely to reshape the partnership agency, but rather to reframe the idea of partnership itself. Funding for Connexions was effectively removed and then, under the Education Act 2011, responsibility for delivery of careers work was passed to schools, without any transfer of funding, albeit with the requirement that they 'secure that all registered pupils at the school are provided with independent careers guidance'. The concept of independence is defined by the Act as being 'provided other than by (a) a teacher employed or engaged at the school, or (b) any other person employed at the school'.

The rationale for this policy was outlined by Skills Minister John Hayes (2010):

*Individual schools and colleges know their own learners and are better placed to assess their needs than anyone else. So it follows that on them must fall the responsibility for ensuring that all learners get the best advice and guidance possible. . . But we ask too much of our teachers when we expect them to be excellent pedagogues and professional careers advisors. So too many schools are not equipped to provide young people with a full understanding of the options open to them. As a result, the ambitions of some are prematurely limited. That's a waste that we just can't afford. And that's why I am clear that close partnerships – whereby schools work together with expert, independent advisers – must be at the heart of our new arrangements. I'm acutely aware that, with so much already expected of them, it would be asking too much to expect schools to keep up to date with all the latest developments in the labour market. So I want them to recognise the importance of independent, impartial, professional careers guidance, and to invest in it. I am confident that schools will want to secure the best for their students.*

In a critique of the coalition government's policy, Hooley & Watts (2011) argued that this reshaping of policy transformed the nature of the relationship between schools and their external partners from that of a partnership to one of customer–contractor. In effect, it removed from careers providers their role in shaping schools' policies in this area. Whereas in the past Connexions and its predecessors were able to influence schools and act as both an agency of government policy and as a source of distinctive professional expertise, in the current arrangements the school will have the power to shape the nature of any interactions with external bodies, on their own terms.

Hooley & Watts (2011) found that during the transitional period the new models of delivery of school-based careers work were characterised by stretching existing resources to produce a broadly similar but reduced service. Models of delivery could be distinguished in terms of their relationship to external careers providers, being organised around a school-based mode (either single-school or multi-school) and/or the development of a contracting-in approach to the delivery of careers services. A survey of members of the Institute of Career Guidance (2011) broadly mirrored these findings.

A more recent paper by Andrews (2012) looked further at the models of delivery of career guidance in particular, and similarly identified two main approaches: internal and school-commissioned models. The internal model consists of the school employing a person within it to deliver careers guidance. This can be done in one of three ways:

- by employing a professionally qualified careers adviser;
- by supporting a teacher, or a member of the non-teaching staff, to gain a recognised qualification in career guidance;
- by giving the job of providing careers guidance to someone who is not qualified or trained to do so.

In the school-commissioned model, by contrast, schools commission external individuals or organisations to deliver a particular careers activity or service. These may take a number of different organisational forms, such as:

- an external individual careers adviser as a self-employed sole trader;
- a social enterprise formed by careers advisers to offer services to schools – this allows the careers advisers more opportunity to access professional support and manage the service during absences;
- career organisations such as former Connexions partnerships or companies.

## Questions for the future

The current situation in England remains one of transition. Despite widespread redundancies and restructuring, a transitional Connexions careers offer has remained in some local authorities (Hooley & Watts, 2011; Andrews, 2012). Schools are therefore only just beginning to consider how to respond to the requirements of the Education Act 2011. It is clear that many had been waiting to see what would be contained in the government's much-delayed Statutory Guidance for schools, linked to the Act. In the event, the published guidance indicates that access to independent careers guidance should be provided 'where it is the most suitable support for young people to make successful transitions'. Implicitly, it is left for schools to determine this, on whatever criteria they choose (Watts, 2012).

In examining the current situation, it is important to maintain a critical perspective. International evidence from countries in which a similar transfer of responsibilities to schools has taken place (notably the Netherlands and New Zealand) strongly suggests that the current policy is likely to lead to a substantial decline in both the extent and quality of careers work in English schools (Watts, 2011a). Since in England (unlike the other two countries) the funding has not been transferred, such effects are likely to be even more profound here. The removal of resourcing for this activity, the decision to devolve responsibility to schools, and the transformation of the partnership model into a customer–contractor approach, all have the potential to move schools' focus away from careers work and to result in young people having less support for their career thinking.

This paper nonetheless seeks to work within the current policy framework and to identify possible routes forward for careers work in schools. In order to do this, it will next identify what practices comprise careers work in schools, before moving on to ask how schools can assemble these components of practice into a coherent and effective whole-school strategy. Finally, it will return to the question of public policy and ask what the role of government might be in shaping the emerging market in positive ways.

# 5

# Components of successful careers work

It is useful to look at the raft of practices that comprise careers work in schools. As already noted, a number of studies have identified these components (Law & Watts, 1977; Andrews, 2000; OECD, 2004; Sultana, 2004; McCrone & Filmer-Sankey, 2012). Drawing together the components so far identified, it would seem that careers work in schools potentially comprises:

- information provision;
- career assessments and tests;
- career counselling;
- careers advice delivered by a non-careers professional
- curricular interventions;
- further study/work-related learning;
- other extra-curricular interventions;
- frameworks for reflection.

As this list demonstrates, career learning is a complex and multi-faceted activity, which is no longer reducible to the provision of a one-to-one guidance session. There are evident overlaps and inter-relationships between these different elements of careers work. For example, a framework of reflection such as an e-portfolio might be used to collect information, create action plans related to advice and guidance, store transcripts of curriculum achievements and record both extracurricular activities and work-related learning. Similarly, information provision can be seen as an isolated component or used to underpin all of the other activities. Furthermore, Rothman & Hillman (2008) have argued that career programmes are more useful when students experience a wider number of career activities, and argue that programmes should therefore provide a diverse range of interventions. Section 6 on approaches to delivery will consider in more detail how these different elements can be combined.

A number of studies have deepened understanding of careers-work practices by creating detailed lists of activities or taxonomies. For example, Donoghue (2008) identified eight components, while Law's (2001) typology had five categories. Dykeman *et al.* (2001) created a more detailed typology comprising 44 interventions grouped into four clusters of career-development interventions: work-based interventions; advising interventions; introductory interventions; and curriculum-based interventions.

It is also useful to note the definition of career guidance by the OECD and European Commission (OECD & EC, 2004), which, although not specific to schools, includes a list of components that can help to define the nature of school-based careers work:

*The activities may take place on an individual or group basis, and may be face-to-face or at a distance (including helplines and web-based services). They include career information provision (in print, ICT-based and other forms), assessment and self-assessment tools, counselling interviews, career education programmes (to help individuals develop their self-awareness, opportunity awareness, and career management skills), taster programmes (to sample options before choosing them), work search programmes, and transition services.*

By synthesising all of these lists and typologies of careers-work components, it is possible to propose a new taxonomy (see Table 1 below) of all the options available to schools.

**Table 1** A taxonomy of schools-based careers-work

<b>Information provision</b>	<b>Career assessments and tests</b>	<b>Professional career counselling</b>	<b>Careers advice delivered by a non-careers professional</b>	<b>Curricular interventions</b>	<b>Further study learning / work-related learning</b>	<b>Other extra-curricular activities</b>	<b>Frameworks for reflection</b>
Information on further studies	Interest inventories	Individual career counselling	Career support as part of a pastoral tutor system	Careers learning as part of PSHE	Learning provider talks in-school (college or other 16–19 provider)	Careers fairs	Use of portfolios and e-portfolios
Information on occupations	Psychometric assessments	Small-group career counselling	Other career advice delivered by someone other than a qualified careers professional	Career learning as part of Citizenship	Games and competitions	Action planning	
A careers library	Computer-assisted guidance systems	Access to telephone career counselling	Career as a cross-curricular theme	Learning provider talks in-school (universities)	Inputs to assemblies	Personal development planning	
Access to careers websites	Other career assessments	Access to online career counselling (e.g. email or chat)	Career learning embedded in other subjects	Visits to other 16–19 learning providers	Parental involvement	Mentoring programmes	
Posters and displays				Visits to universities		Community/civic participation	
Other labour market information (LMI)			Long-block timetabling	Volunteering			
			Separately timetabled careers lessons	Employer talks			
				Workplace visits			
				Project work	Mini-enterprises		
				Online e-learning	Other work simulations		
					Work experience		
					Work shadowing		

Definitions of each of these terms are provided in the Appendix.

# 6

# Approaches to delivery

Given the wide array of activities that it is possible to organise under the heading of careers work, schools may feel unsure about how to organise these components, especially in relation to what is considered best practice. It is possible to identify three different approaches that schools can take to the overall delivery of services:

- activity-based approaches;
- service-based approaches;
- curriculum-led approaches.

We shall explore these and the evidence (or otherwise) underpinning them.

## Activity-based approaches

The first possible approach would be to view some of the simpler elements of Table I (page 20) as a menu of possibilities. Schools could then see the delivery of careers work as being about the selection of a series of components that fit their needs. This kind of approach views each of the components as inherently effective in its own right. Practice in the early period of Aimhigher was often conceived around this kind of activity-based approach (Moore & Hooley, 2011). One Aimhigher partnership manager described the organisation's role as being like a travelling salesman opening a suitcase and saying, 'Do you want any of these?' It was found that schools often designed interventions around logistical considerations rather than around any kind of service design or pedagogy. Ultimately, this left the elements of careers work as peripheral bolt-ons to the students' experience and provided little or no opportunity for any learning to be consolidated through effective preparation and follow-up, a particularly damaging outcome given that it is reflection that converts experience into learning (Kolb, 1984).

Activity-based approaches are superficially appealing to schools because they are logically easy to manage. Activities such as providing access to careers websites, employer talks, visits to learning providers and careers fairs can be slotted in around the curriculum wherever space can be found. There is also some evidence that it is possible to measure effects associated with certain activities, e.g. careers fairs (Kolodinsky et al., 2006).

In general, of the categories in Table I (page 20), activity-based interventions tend to focus around information provision, further study learning/work-related learning and other extra-curricular activities. In other words, they do not include the more sustained or integrative components that allow experiences to be integrated into students' career thinking. In a discussion of effective practice in the delivery of employer talks and other employer-focused work-related learning, the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services (2011) noted that these activities were more effective where they were integrated with the curriculum and part of a strategic school approach to the delivery of careers work.

It is possible to deliver an activity-based approach through a mixture of internal and external resourcing and/or ownership. Schools may choose to create activities using internal resources or may bring in

external providers, either to deliver a single activity or to organise a programme of such activities. The activities themselves may or may not be well run, engaging and effective within their own terms, but if their integration into the school curriculum is absent, their long-term impact is likely to be limited.

## Service-based approaches

The Education Act 2011 appears to conceive the delivery of careers work mainly as a service-based approach. As noted earlier, schools are required to ‘secure that all registered pupils at the school are provided with independent careers guidance during the relevant phase of their education’. Furthermore, the school is, in principle, required to bring in an external party to deliver this career guidance. This element of the Act has its origins in concerns about the potential bias that may exist in career guidance delivered by interested parties such as schools themselves (which may, in particular, have an interest in students staying on at 16 rather than going elsewhere). However, the insistence on external provision was effectively undermined by the subsequent clarification that schools can formally meet this requirement by providing access to a helpline or website (Watts, 2011b), such as that provided by the new ‘National Careers Service’. Although denied by some ministers, the Statutory Guidance does nothing to stop schools confining their provision to this if they so wish (Watts, 2012).

Of the components in Table 1 (page 20), service-based approaches will usually be based around those elements related to information provision, career assessments and tests, professional careers counselling or careers advice delivered by non-careers professional. In this approach, young people are guaranteed access to a service that may be available during school time or outside it. Service-based approaches may be conceived on a one-off basis, or may be coherent, progressive and developmental. They are usually designed to support young people in thinking through options and choices rather than just providing them with an activity or an experience, but if they are not connected to any wider career learning provision in the school, such services are likely to be more time-consuming and less effective. For instance, McNicol (2005) found that in the case of the provision of careers library services, the failure to connect the service to wider activities within the school resulted in poor usage of the careers library by students. The services may not even be conceived as operating within an educational paradigm, instead being conceived as administrative (e.g. filling in a UCAS form), support (e.g. helping with subject choice) or counselling (e.g. addressing the interface between wider personal issues and work/learning) services. The main focus tends to be on making and implementing immediate educational decisions, with the degree of attention to their career implications depending on the way in which the service is framed.

This kind of approach is evident in certain conceptions of the school guidance counsellor model that is widespread in North America and other countries including Ireland. An alternative example of a service-based approach is in Germany, where Federal Employment Office career counsellors visit schools, run class talks and provide small-group guidance and short personal interviews in the penultimate year of compulsory schooling. Jenschke *et al.* (2010) pointed out that this model of career learning is based around a limited decision-making paradigm.

## Curriculum-led approaches

Finally, in a curriculum-led approach, the focus is on supporting students’ career learning, including the development of career-management skills that will enable them to make effective career decisions and

transitions not only now but also in the future. This approach requires the school to conceptualise career development as having similarities with other kinds of learning that the school is seeking to develop. In other words, career is viewed as an important focal point for learning, with a body of knowledge, skills and pedagogic approaches connected with it.

The move to a curriculum-led approach does not necessarily determine the mode of delivery. Curriculum-led career learning can occur across the range of components depicted in Table I. However, the curricular interventions clearly have a crucial role, supporting and integrating the other elements. Solberg *et al.* (2011) argued that portfolio-based learning offers a powerful tool for integrating and mobilising the learning that takes place across these different components of careers work and the wider lives of learners. Rothman & Hillman (2008) suggested that such a paradigm would benefit from multi-faceted and multi-modal approaches; its distinctive element, though, is its connecting together of appropriate components through a pedagogic model. The OECD (2003) set out the possible key elements of this model in four recommendations for schools:

1. Schools should adopt a learning-centred approach, over and above an information and advice approach. This means building career education into the curriculum.
2. Schools should take a developmental approach, tailoring the content of career education and guidance to the developmental stages that students find themselves in, and including career education classes and experiences throughout schooling, not just at one point.
3. Schools should adopt a more student-centred approach through, for example, incorporating learning from and reflecting upon experience, self-directed learning methods, and learning from significant others, such as employers, parents, alumni and older students.
4. Schools should incorporate a universal approach, with career education and guidance forming part of the education of all students, not just those in particular types of school or programme.

It is possible to imagine alternative pedagogic models that draw on both different career theory perspectives and broader pedagogic thinking. One area that would be interesting to explore through further study is how schools are able to relate their existing pedagogic approaches to the delivery of career learning.

There is a considerable literature that supports and describes learning approaches as a model for delivery of careers work. An example is the influential Comprehensive Guidance Program (CGP) in the United States, devised by Gysbers (1997) in the early 1970s (see Hughes & Karp, 2004). This model combines guidance counsellor interventions, work in the curriculum and access to careers resources with a strategic commitment at the school level. The CGP has been extensively evaluated and shown to be effective (Nelson & Gardner, 1998; Kucker, 2000; Lapan *et al.*, 2001; Gysbers, 2005). This approach, and similar approaches such as that described by Dik *et al.* (2011) or the guidance-oriented school (*l'école orientante*) in Quebec in Canada, emphasise the importance of multi-professional teams organised around the school and delivering careers content in ways that are similar to, and often inter-related with, other curriculum content.

Within the context of the UK, the tradition which draws from Law & Watts (1977) and was discussed earlier (in Section 4 on the evolution of provision in England) provides another strong set of examples of career-learning models (for a discussion of the development of this tradition, see Law, 1996b). Blenkinsop *et al.* (2006) echoed the North American findings when they found that young people in UK schools made more rational and thought-through career and learning decisions in schools that combined effective school leadership, careers education and careers guidance.

As with other approaches, it is possible for curriculum-led approaches to be delivered by a mix of internal and external providers. However, unlike activity-based and service-based approaches, it is essential that there is active whole-school buy-in to the approach. While a school's approach might be formulated jointly with a partner and with elements of delivery contracted out, the core has to be owned, in significant part, by the school itself. Accordingly, the new school-based model of delivery, in principle, offers opportunities for strengthening the implementation of this model.

# 7

## What constitutes quality in the delivery of careers work in schools?

As suggested in the discussion above, the evidence that exists on the delivery of careers work in schools points towards the adoption of the curriculum-led approach. Research suggests that the integration of a variety of careers interventions with each other and with the wider school curriculum leads to more effective outcomes. Much of this evidence is drawn from studies in the USA, and is centred around the comprehensive guidance programme tradition. In addition, important research conducted by National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) in the UK in the late 1990s (Morris, 1996; Morris *et al.*, 1999a, b) demonstrated the effects of career-related skills on effective transitions and reduced drop-out, and indicated the need for a range of closely integrated career development activities to develop these skills. The typology of activities developed by NFER was similar to the components of careers work developed in this study.

With this as a basis, this section will begin by discussing further what we mean by ‘quality’, before going on to outline thinking in England and the rest of the UK in relation to the quality and effectiveness of careers work in schools. The term ‘quality’ can be a slippery one. In its use in relation to educational programmes, it essentially means good and effective practices that can be identified, observed and reproduced. Clearly there are some elements of educational programmes that will not meet these requirements. Having a charismatic and brilliant guidance practitioner cannot be described as a feature of quality in this sense, but having a well-trained, regularly observed practitioner who learns from the feedback of her or his clients can. In other words, quality is essentially a measure of process and approach. However, there is still a wide variety of different kinds of quality, and it is important to be aware of how these reframe the discussion of what constitutes quality in the context of careers work in schools.

Plant (2004, p. 143) identifies four poles around which quality standards are organised:

- standards relating to inputs and processes versus standards relating to outcomes;
- standards derived from the viewpoint of the client/customer versus standards derived from the need for public accountability;
- standards that are self-assessed versus standards for external accreditation;
- general guidelines versus specific measurable standards.

There are clearly merits in all of these different approaches to measuring quality. It is important to be sure that inputs are appropriate, that outputs are measurable, that clients are satisfied, that public (or other) monies are spent appropriately, that practitioners are monitoring quality and are accountable, that there is a broad agreement about approach, and that specific indicators exist which can be used to ensure performance. The approach that is taken to monitoring quality is likely to focus on one or more of these areas.

Plant (2004, p. 143) goes on to identify three key areas where the quality of careers work is generally measured:

- the quality of occupational and educational information;
- the qualifications/competencies of guidance staff;
- standards/guidelines relating to the delivery of guidance.

As can be seen, these tend to focus on inputs rather than outputs. There is correspondingly discussion about the appropriate balance of interventions and elements to be included in the framework (Hawthorn, 1995; Cedefop, 2009), the kinds of information resources that are required for a quality programme (Bimrose et al., 2006; eGUIDE, 2007; Department for Employment and Learning, 2009) and the levels of staff qualification required to deliver the programme (Henderson et al., 2004; Sultana, 2009; Cedefop, 2009). In their critical review, Bimrose et al. (2006, p. 9) argued that it was important to focus more specifically on the end product in quality-assurance processes, i.e. on whether the careers work intervention could be seen to have a positive outcome for the client or customer, and on understanding the cost of this to the organisation.

There have been numerous attempts by the government to address the issue of quality in careers work in schools in England. In general, these have conformed to Plant's (2004) characterisation of quality frameworks and have largely focused on input factors. However, many of these frameworks emerged following research and consultation with the sector, and so at least serve as a distillation of the wisdom of the sector on what is considered quality delivery.

Under the previous government, statutory guidance was published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF, 2009a) alongside non-statutory duties and guidelines including the *Quality Standards for Young People's Information, Advice and Guidance* (DCSF, 2007), the *Career Work-Related Learning and Enterprise 11 to 19 framework* (QCA, 2008) and the *Quality Standards for Work Experience* (DCSF, 2008). The recently published *Statutory Guidance for Schools – Careers Guidance* (DfE, 2012) effectively replaces the previous government interventions on this issue and is both too slight and too vague to provide schools with much in the way of guidance on quality. The Association for Careers Education and Guidance (ACEG) has responded to this vagueness by publishing its own framework, which sets out a series of learning outcomes designed to inform a curriculum-led approach (ACEG, 2012). However, although the ACEG framework is a useful tool, it has no formal status within schools.

At an operational level, however, government guidelines have frequently been summarised, operationalised and enhanced through a series of local quality awards that were usually administered by local Connexions companies (see, e.g., Bysshe's [2005] evaluation of Investors in Careers). These were endorsed by the Careers Profession Task Force (2010), whose 14 recommendations to the government have all been accepted. They included (recommendation 10) the establishment of a kitemark to validate the different careers quality awards for schools, colleges and work-based learning providers. In March 2011, Careers England was commissioned by the Careers Profession Task Force to create the kitemark that is now known as QiCS (the Quality in Careers Standard). To meet the standard, quality marks have to demonstrate that they meet requirements in three categories:

- award criteria, content and coverage (eight key requirements);
- assessment processes for the award (five key requirements);
- management of the award (three key requirements).

The QiCS does not supplant existing quality awards but rather creates a coherent national framework for quality in relation to careers work in schools. The framework emphasises staff training and qualifications, engagement of school leadership in the programme, impartiality, the centrality of career education and curriculum interventions, the importance of career and labour market information, the value of work with external partners, families and carers, and the importance of monitoring, evaluation, review and development of the programme (Careers England, 2011).

The kinds of approach set out in QiCS clearly chime with the research on the comprehensive guidance system set out earlier in this paper. It is also an approach that is echoed elsewhere in the UK and the rest of the world. For example, the Careers Wales Quality Award (CWQA), the Careers Scotland Quality Framework, the Australian Careers Education Quality Framework (Australian Government, 1999) and other similar frameworks in Ireland and New Zealand (Careers New Zealand, 2011) cover similar ground. However, it is probably fair to say that the sophistication and level of implementation of quality approaches in school careers work are more developed in England than anywhere else. Where schools are implementing a quality programme as recognised by one of the kitemarked awards, they are implementing a programme that fits within the curriculum-based approach outlined in this paper. A key question for policy, therefore, is how to facilitate and encourage schools' engagement with the ownership and management of such delivery.

# 8

# Conclusions, key questions and recommendations for the future

This paper has documented the dramatic changes that have been experienced in relation to the delivery of careers work in schools in England since the general election in 2010. The government has made a number of radical changes to the infrastructure of careers work, including: the removal of much of the dedicated careers funding; the devolution of responsibility to schools; and consequently the transformation of the partnership model into a customer–contractor approach. It has created a market in careers work that schools have the primary responsibility for driving. The level and manner in which schools engage in this market will therefore determine its size, nature and effectiveness. The behaviours of schools within this market and their level of commitment to the delivery of careers work are not yet clear.

This paper has also set out the policy rationale for maintaining the provision of careers work in schools. It has been argued that careers work delivers a range of learning goals, labour market goals and social-equity goals which are likely to be attractive to both policy-makers and schools themselves. In addition, the paper has explored how a range of standards and quality-assurance processes can contribute to effective delivery of careers work. However, the government's support for the standards and quality frameworks has so far been very limited and, consequently, is thus far doing little to frame schools' behaviour within the careers-work market.

The paper has sought to clarify what is actually delivered under the heading of careers work in schools. It has noted that there is a diversity of types of activity that can be delivered and has observed that, in the past, schools have approached this delivery in a variety of different ways. However, it is possible to draw out a number of elements that are likely to be relevant to any models that are developed, notably:

- the policy framework and objectives within which the models operate;
- the components that are delivered;
- the approach that the school takes to combine and inform the delivery of those components;
- how the model is positioned in relation to the wider school curriculum;
- how the model relates to stakeholders and partners outside the school, including both careers providers and other relevant external stakeholders (e.g. other learning providers, employers);
- how standards are guaranteed and the model is quality-assured.

Ultimately this means that within the current policy framework, the main arena in which there is capacity to influence the development of careers work is at the level of the school. As schools are now contractors in a careers-work market, it is their market behaviour and their understanding of what they are trying to achieve within that market that are likely to inform how the current generations of young people experience careers work in school. Critical to this is how schools approach this new role as contractors of services and how this contracting responsibility is managed by the leadership of the school. This is a difficult but not impossible challenge for busy school staff to meet. However, in the competition for resources and attention from school senior leadership, the lack of a serious policy commitment to standards and quality in careers provision may prove to be decisive.

Regardless of the policy environment, however, schools are still in the position of making decisions about their provision. It is hoped that this paper can support them in identifying approaches that are likely to be effective. Section 6 on approaches to delivery set out a range of different approaches that schools might adopt (activity-based, service-based, curriculum-led). The evidence clearly suggests that the curriculum-led approach is likely to be the most effective way to deliver careers work. This approach is broadly endorsed by the quality awards that have recently been drawn together into QiCS. However, as already stated, there is considerable space within each of these approaches for different models of practice to emerge. This paper particularly highlights the issue of how schools work with external careers providers in relation to the management and delivery of careers work. There are other important issues relating to the relationships with other external partners (particularly employers and post-secondary learning providers), the components that are chosen (from Table 1, page 20) and the theoretical ideas that underpin them (see Law, 1996b).

An important policy question remains: how happy is the government for provision within schools to follow the decisions of school leaders, including their possible lack of engagement? Policy-makers appear to have conceived the paradigm around the service-based approach outlined in this paper. However, they do not seem hostile to the curriculum-led approach that the evidence suggests might be more effective. But if schools opt to deliver a narrowly activity-based or service-based approach, or indeed to do little or nothing at all, what will exist – and what levers can be utilised – to tackle this?

Given the transitional nature of the current arrangements, this is an opportune time to consider how policy-makers, schools and researchers might respond to some of the challenges outlined in this paper.

## Key questions for policy-makers

The current policy framework has been explored within this paper and the key features of school-based autonomy, lack of new funding and closure of the Connexions service have been noted. Within the current school-based framing of careers work, it is suggested that policy-makers consider the following issues:

- How far do the goals of careers work, described here as learning goals, labour market goals and social-equity goals, connect with current policy concerns, including wider policy aims for education and youth policy?
- How can accountability frameworks be used to inform schools' successful participation in the new careers-work market?
- What resources can be provided centrally, via local authorities, academy chains or other 'middle-tier' structures, via relevant professional bodies or directly to schools, to encourage and support the adoption of the curriculum-led model?

## Key questions for schools

The evidence suggests that the curriculum-led model offers schools the most effective method for delivering careers work. Accordingly, schools may wish to review their programmes in relation to the following questions:

- How far does existing careers work connect to the mission, ethos and curriculum of the whole school, and how can these be made to align more effectively?

- What level of expertise exists within the school to support the delivery of careers work, and how might this expertise be developed and supplemented?
- How can internal resources and external partners be most effectively utilised to support the career learning of young people?

## Key questions for researchers

There are a considerable number of unknowns in the current situation. England is moving from an approach to careers work (partnership) that has endured for half a century to a new (school-based) approach that has echoes of systems elsewhere in the world, but which is largely untested in the context of the UK. Current policy in this area has not been based on research evidence. Accordingly, researchers and research funders may wish to seek answers to the following questions:

- What are the attitudes and levels of understanding of school leaders and general teaching staff to careers work? How are these attitudes likely to impact on resource allocation to careers work in schools?
- As the school-based careers-work market unfolds in 2012/13, what is the nature of the market (number and types of players, overall value and dynamism) and the consequent nature of practice in schools? What impacts (positive or negative) will these have on the career-management skills of young people?
- What approaches can be suggested for schools through the examination of international evidence and innovative practices in related fields?

## Recommendations

Careers is a vital policy area which needs ongoing attention and investment – the current context of high unemployment, austerity and recession is a perfect storm for young people – and one which a decline in careers work in schools threatens to exacerbate. We have four key recommendations:

1. **Government should be carefully monitoring changing practices and ensuring that schools are providing appropriate career support for young people** – international evidence suggests that current policies are likely to lead to a decline in provision, so it is important that the situation is monitored to evaluate the current policies and support future policy-making.
2. **Government should also carefully monitor the impact of any decline in school-based careers work on social mobility and social inclusion** – there are concerns that the changes will have a disproportionate impact on more vulnerable and less advantaged learners.
3. **Schools should be encouraged to conceive careers as a key component of their mission and to actively link this to the curriculum** – evidence shows that careers work is most effective when it is well supported by school leadership and delivered in a way that is strongly connected to the curriculum.
4. **Attention should be given to how schools are supported to deliver effective and high-quality careers work in the new policy context** – the loss of the middle tier between schools and government (notably local authorities and Connexions) risks leaving some schools isolated, with potentially weak infrastructures for professional development and practice improvement.

## Concluding comment

This paper has sought to open up a discussion on careers work in schools which supports reflective, constructive and evidence-based approaches to the changing terrain. At the heart of this discussion, it is important to reassert the importance of ensuring that young people have access to the high-quality career support they need in order to realise their potential and contribute to society. The next phase of Careers 2020 will establish how schools are already responding and how they plan to respond in the future.

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# Appendix: Definitions

**Access to careers websites.** The direction of pupils towards online resources that can inform their career exploration and thinking. This may include the creation of school-based portals, recommendation or the provision of time for exploration. Resources may include both those that are freely available on the web and those to which the school has purchased access.

**Access to online career-counselling services.** An online computer-mediated advice and/or counselling interaction between a client and a career helper. This may be synchronous (e.g. via a chat facility) or asynchronous (e.g. via email), and text-based or multimedia.

**Access to telephone career-counselling services.** A telephone-mediated advice and/or counselling interaction between a client and a career helper.

**Action planning.** A supported process which helps an individual to focus ideas and decide and plan the steps needed to achieve particular goals.

**Career advice delivered by a non-professional or para-professional.** One-to-one support to help people to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. This is appropriately distinguished from career counselling by an unwillingness to explore and challenge individual identity and motivation.

**Career as a cross-curricular theme.** Using the concept of career or related themes (e.g. work, learning or aspiration) to link other curriculum areas together and facilitate learners to make connections between curriculum areas and their career thinking.

**Career assessments.** A tool that helps individuals to determine useful areas for further exploration. Career assessments are based on a range of different approaches, but commonly use a formal instrument to identify interests and personality type and then suggest alignment with occupations.

**Career learning embedded in other subjects.** The delivery of career learning as part of another subject. In the context of England, the most common subject area is PSHE, but it is also possible for career learning to be usefully embedded in a range of other subjects including citizenship, English, foreign languages, humanities, STEM subjects and ICT.

**Career support as part of a pastoral tutor system.** The inclusion of career learning as a part of a broader pastoral support system. This may take the form of a pupil being encouraged to have a career discussion with a form or personal tutor.

**Career(s) advice.** The provision of support, usually on a one to one or small group basis, whereby individuals are able to understand and interpret career information in their personal situation.

**Career(s) education.** Programmes of learning that help people to develop self-awareness, their knowledge of opportunities and the skills to make decisions, also to manage transitions through their life, learning and work.

**Career(s) guidance.** A term that can be used to encompass all forms of careers work but is also applied more specifically to intensive one-to-one careers work delivered by a professional.

**Career(s) information.** Information that supports an individual in their journey through life, learning and work.

**Career(s) learning.** The process that an individual goes through as they explore life, learning and work and relate it to their own understanding of the world.

**Careers co-ordinator.** A member of staff who is responsible for managing careers work within a school, and may also contribute to its delivery or the management of external career support providers.

**Careers fairs.** A chance for pupils to meet a range of employers, to learn about possible careers and enhance their understanding of the qualifications required and recruitment processes. They also serve a function for employers in allowing them to promote opportunities, inform potential recruits of requirements and even begin the process of recruitment.

**Careers libraries.** The provision of a variety of information and resources to support career planning and career development. These are usually hosted within the school and are based around a physical collection of careers materials. However, increasingly careers libraries also include access to online resources and consequently overlap with the access to careers websites area.

**Citizenship.** A curriculum subject concerned with providing pupils with the knowledge, skills and understanding to play an effective role in society at local, national and international levels.

**Community/civic participation.** The process of participation in the civic life of the school or wider community. This is particularly relevant to career development if pupils have the opportunity to identify and develop the skills that underpin this participation.

**Computer-assisted guidance systems.** A system of inter-related career assessment, generation of options, information and automated advice.

**E-learning.** Computer-mediated or online learning. E-learning will include varying degrees of information provision, automated interaction and mediated human interaction. In the context of a school, it will commonly be delivered through the school's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) as part of a blended intervention.

**Employer talks.** Provision of information by individuals active in the labour market about the occupation, sector and company in which they work.

**Framework for reflection.** The provision of a structured opportunity to think through experiences and learning.

**Games and competitions.** The use of fun and competitive activities to engage pupils in career learning.

**Group career counselling.** Facilitated career learning undertaken in a group. This may be built around a group counselling paradigm or around a learning paradigm.

**Individual career counselling.** A one-to-one career support session delivered by a careers professional.

**Information on further studies.** The provision of information about learning providers, opportunities and progression routes.

**Information on occupations.** The provision of information about vocations usually including required qualifications, salary, progression routes and descriptions of the work involved.

**Inputs to assemblies.** The inclusion of careers content in school assemblies.

**Interest inventories.** A self-assessment tool, used in career planning, that assesses one's likes and dislikes of a variety of activities, objects, and types of people and relates these likes and dislikes to occupational areas.

**Labour market information.** Information which provides career explorers with insights about the operation of markets for learning, skills, employment, labour and their relationship to the wider economy.

**Learning provider talks.** Provision of information by representatives of learning providers (sometimes current or recent students) about what their organisation provides, to inform pupils' learning decisions.

**Long-block timetabling.** The devotion of a block of curriculum time to career learning. This can be useful to enable activities which do not sit easily within the existing timetable such as experiential activities, talks and visits.

**Mentoring programmes.** The pairing of pupils with adults in the community to support their learning about work or other issues related to career development. Most often this activity takes place beyond the regular school day and is a partnership established with the goal of sustainability beyond the course or class in which it was established.

**Mini-enterprises.** A form of enterprise learning where young people set up an actual or simulated business.

**Parental involvement.** The engagement of parents in the career learning of pupils either as a resource for their own children or as a wider-school resource, e.g. to give Employer talks, provide Work experience opportunities or contribute to other activities.

**Personal development planning.** A structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performance and/or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development.

**Posters and displays.** Career-related visual aids, notice boards and other stimulus.

**Professional career counselling.** Impartial and independent individual (or small-group) career guidance, delivered by a qualified careers professional.

**Project work.** A theme- and task-centred mode of teaching and learning. It allows for a wide scope of self-determined action for both the individual and the small group of learners, within a general framework of a structured activity.

**PSHE.** Personal, Social and Health Education - a curriculum subject concerned with personal, social, health and economic understanding and development.

**Psychometric assessments.** The use of instruments that measure knowledge, abilities, attitudes, personality traits, and education to support self-awareness and career planning.

**Separately timetabled careers lessons.** Career learning delivered as a discrete curriculum area. In some cases, this may lead to summative assessments and credits or a qualification.

**Study skills development.** The provision of support and opportunities for reflection to enable pupils to enhance their effectiveness as learners.

**Use of portfolios and e-portfolios.** A tool that can be used to aid reflection, the recognition of achievement and the organisation of information relevant to career-building. Increasingly, portfolios are delivered online and are known as e-portfolios.

**Visits to learning providers.** Organised visits to universities, colleges and other forms of learning provision to enhance pupils' understanding of the learning market.

**Volunteering.** The giving of time and energy to benefit others. It often provides an opportunity for individuals to develop their skills and experiment with different types of work.

**Work experience.** A placement with an employer in which a young person carries out a range of tasks in much the same way as an employee, with the emphasis on learning from the experience.

**Work shadowing.** An observation of the daily routine of an employee, usually accompanied by 'interviews' with the employee to discover more about his/her work role.

**Work simulations.** An operational representation of work tasks outside of a real work situation – for instance, teams of students taking part in business games to resolve business-related problems, and using role-playing, teamwork, decision-making and problem-solving skills.

**Work visits.** Organised visits to employers to support the pupil's career exploration.



Careers work in English schools has endured much turbulence recently. The government has now established a statutory duty on schools to secure provision. But it is framed very loosely, comes with no funding and offers no clear model of provision. So what should school offers look like? How can schools ensure the quality of career learning and career guidance that are so vital for all young people, and particularly so for those who cannot rely on their family networks for advice and opportunities? This paper sets out the key findings from an evidence-based review of careers work in English schools. The review charts the recent history of careers work in England, and is accompanied by a 'toolkit' that school decision-makers may draw on to inform their choices about careers provision. The review draws together the research evidence on the constituents of high-quality careers provision and distils these findings to make recommendations for best practice.